

Spain



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Spain

Brief Historical Overview



The **Kingdom of Spain** is the larger of the two countries that make up the Iberian peninsula—the other is [Portugal](#)—located in southwestern Europe. To the west (and, in [Galicia](#), south), it borders [Portugal](#). To the south, it borders [Gibraltar](#) and, through its cities in North Africa ([Ceuta](#) and [Melilla](#)), [Morocco](#). To the northeast, along the [Pyrenees](#) mountain range, it borders [France](#) and the tiny [principality](#) of [Andorra](#). It also includes the [Balearic Islands](#) in the [Mediterranean Sea](#), the [Canary Islands](#) in the [Atlantic Ocean](#) and a number of uninhabited islands on the Mediterranean side of the [strait of Gibraltar](#)

In the second half of the 20th century, Spain has played a catch-up role in the western international community; it joined the EU in 1986. Continuing challenges include Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) terrorism and further reductions in unemployment.



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Spain is a [constitutional monarchy](#), with a hereditary [monarch](#) and a bicameral [parliament](#), the [Cortes Generales](#) or National Assembly. The [executive branch](#) consists of a Council of Ministers presided over by the President of Government (comparable to a [prime minister](#)), proposed by the monarch and elected by the National Assembly following legislative elections.

Administratively, Spain is divided into 50 [provinces](#), grouped into 17 [autonomous communities](#) and 2 autonomous cities with high degree of autonomy. Madrid is the capital city.

Spain's population is 40,341,462 , the majority of whom are Roman Catholic.

Chief of state: King JUAN CARLOS I (since 22 November 1975); Heir Apparent Prince FELIPE, son of the monarch, born 30 January 1968

Head of government: President of the Government and Prime Minister Jose Luis RODRIGUEZ ZAPATERO



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Major Holidays and Traditions

Jan 6th Dia de los tres Reyes (12th night, when Christmas presents are given)

Mar 19th San Jose (Father's Day)

May 1st Dia del Trabajo (Labour Day)

Jun 24th San Juan (St.John's Day)

Jun 29th San Pedro y San Pablo (St.Peter & St.Paul)

Jul 25th Santiago (St.James, patron saint of Spain)

Oct 12th Dia de la Hispanidad (Columbus Day)

Nov 1st Todos los Santos (All Saints Day)

Dec 6th Dia de la Constitucion (Constitution Day)

Dec 25th Christmas Day



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National Dish

Not the paella, but the cocido is the foremost representative and beloved national dish of Spain. Wholesome stew, predominantly consisting of chick peas, cabbage, chorizo, blood sausage or pudding and vegetables, stewed in broth. Chicken, beef or pork varieties exist also. Usually, a bowl of the broth is first eaten as a soup appetizer, followed by the solids.

2 lb. beef shanks

3 qt. water

2 cloves garlic

1 onion, sliced

8 peppercorns

3 carrots, sliced

3 zucchini, sliced

1/2 lb. green beans, cut up

salt to taste

3 ears of corn (fresh or frozen), cut
into 1-inch pieces

Start the meat in cold water. Make a rich broth by cooking it slowly with garlic, onion, pepper and salt. When the meat is tender, strain off broth. Add the vegetables, corn last and cook slowly until done. Add the meat, cut in cubes, to the soup. If extra piquancy is desired, you may serve this with jalapeno sauce. (Spanish version of Brunswick Stew.) Pick the corn up with fingers.

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Major Languages

Castilian Spanish 74%, Catalan 17%, Galician 7%, Basque 2%; note - Castilian is the official language nationwide; the other languages are official regionally. Interestingly, Basque is not known to be related to any other language.

Basic vocabulary in Spanish:

Hello – ¡Hola!

Good day – Buen día

Good evening – Buenas tardes

Good bye – Adiós

Thank you – Gracias

You're welcome – De nada

How much does it cost? – ¿Cuánto costa?

Excuse me/ I am sorry – Con permiso / Lo siento

Yes - Sí

No - No

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Travel Tips

Spain has always been famous for its bull-fights which are undergoing a new lease of life with a great increase in interest. In Spain the bullfight is called the *Fiesta Nacional (The national Sport)*.

Eating out in Spain is relatively cheap and meals are usually substantial instead of gourmet. The Spanish tradition of [tapas](#) is a good way to sample the local food.

Spaniards often start the evening with el paseo, a leisurely stroll through the main streets or along the *paseo marítimo* in the coastal resorts.

Flamenco is a genuine Spanish art form, or, to be more exact, a genuine Southern Spanish art. Gypsies are often credited with the "invention" of flamenco.

Information from the CIA World Factbook, Wikipedia, and other websites.

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